

Brown

SOME
DOCUMENTS
RELATIVE TO THE LATE
PARLIAMENTARY CONDUCT
OF
DOCTOR BROWNE,
REPRESENTATIVE IN PARLIAMENT
FOR THE
UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN.

1800.

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P R E F A C E.

THE man who from his infancy for thirty years has borne an unblemished character, and been accustomed to much popularity, will naturally feel some uneasiness, and occasion some to his friends, when the tide turns, and the veering breath of popular applause deserts his course ; such feelings have prompted a friend of Dr. Browne to print the following documents, not for general publication, but to distribute among a few friends. They prompted the same person to publish in a newspaper his answer to his constituents the moment it was given : The decided measure startled the adversary, who then cunningly pretended to condemn it, and to say that the address had never been intended for publication ; (an assertion totally incredible, and inconsistent with its plain object of depreciating character,) and to lament that they were not allowed to whisper away that character in private companies, where the answer and defence would never have been heard of. To prevent such attempts is the object of the present collection.

One word as to a charge of ingratitude in some of his constituents : strictly speaking it may be said, constituents cannot be ungrateful, as a man by doing his duty doth not oblige them ; yet if a man to please them has relinquished and passed over voluntarily many opportunities of advancing himself considerably and with honour in the world ; and they afterwards without any cause or pretence of blame seek to discard and to disgrace him, and, when they think he is no longer useful to their purposes, endeavour to substitute others whom they apprehend more likely to advance the interests of individuals, the term may not be altogether inapplicable.* And if in compliance with his own real opinions, unconnected with complaisance to his constituents, he rejects great and tempting opportunities, (which more than one man alive knows Dr. Browne did in the time of the regency,) it should seem to be some ground for supposing that a man still acted according to his real opinions, and for expecting that he should be treated with respect, or at least with decency.

His

* Notwithstanding all the services done by former members to the University, they were deserted ; one remarkable instance of an illustrious person offers itself ; and as soon as Dr. Browne ceased to be thought necessary as an opponent to the Hutchinson family, incessant endeavours were made to supplant him.

His opinions on the subject of Union may be collected from the following documents, and they are briefly these; he did always from the year 1782 think that this Kingdom, nominally independent but really governed by British influence in its own parliament on imperial questions, and by colonial prejudice and monopoly in its own private concerns, stood in the most awkward situation; tending to separation if it really asserted and exerted independence, with the mere shadow of a parliament if it did not; he nevertheless thought that by wise and moderate councils, and conciliatory measures, and a temperate and rational reform in parliament, we might go on without an Union, to which he was in general and the abstract always inclined, not as desirable if it could be avoided, but as probably necessary. When he found by the madness of democracy and the fury of rebellion all his hopes frustrated, and that all attempts at reform tended only to civil war, and in fact by the folly of some and wickedness of others terminated in it, he became decidedly of opinion that an Union was necessary. He was always a friend to the church and to establishments; he was a friend to a junction with England, he was an orangeman if

if that term means a friend to the memory of King William, to the revolution and to rational liberty ; but he was not an orangeman if that term means a persecuting bigot, and the conduct of such orangemen as much decided him in favour of the Union as the conduct of the rebels and perhaps were as much the cause of the Union ; with these sentiments, when a noble Lord in 1798 sent circular letters to all members of Parliament to know their sentiments on the subject of Union, he told him and every other man that asked him, that he was decidedly in favour of the measure, but was afraid of his constituents ; he had the weakness to suffer that fear to carry his vote against his real sentiments in the subsequent session (and thence and thence only the apparent contradiction in his conduct, if there be such), and he had the folly to hope that experience of the situation to which foolish councils had brought us would repair the fault and teach men that if we were not to have Union with England we must have internal conciliation ; he had the weakness to suppose that still it was possible to consider this land as a great and cemented kingdom, and not as a petty and infuriated colony ; but when he found his mistake, when

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he found himself acting with a few old friends who he knew would be deserted the moment this business was over, but for the most part with men who only were for rejecting the Union to return to the same violent councils which had precipitated it, he determined to recur to the principle he had always thought right, and which indeed it was now evident must take place when that of conciliation was rejected, and decidedly to support an Union between England and Ireland, provided the terms were good and desirable.



DOCUMENTS

RELATIVE TO THE LATE
PARLIAMENTARY CONDUCT

OF

DOCTOR BROWNE,

RESPECTING THE UNION.

Extracts from a Speech of Doctor Browne in the House of Commons on Friday 15th of February 1799, as taken from the Dublin Evening Post of February the 19th, 1799.

“ THOUGH I at present vote against the Union, I wish to treat the arguments for it with all possible respect. I agree with the noble Lord (*Castlereagh*) in thinking that no motion can go to all futurity, though I do not therefore think the present motion (Lord *Corry's*) unnecessary.”

" I am one of those, who, shocked with the distractions of the nation, have been inclined to listen to any rational resource, and was at first disposed to receive the propositions for an Union at least into consideration, if it be shewn that parliament is competent so to do."

And the conclusion of his speech was in these words:

" I commend the motion of the noble Lord as cautiously worded as to futurity ; I should have objected to it, if it went to bind me for ever ; at all events I cannot foresee any possible circumstance which can incline me to an Union, except it were necessary to prevent the country from becoming a French province ; but not being able to foresee all possible circumstances, I did, even at my election into parliament, boldly refuse to make any such unnecessary declaration."*

*At this period nobody pretended to doubt or attempted to contradict this assertion either in or out of the house ; the denial of it was an after-thought.

*Extracts from Doctor Browne's answer to a part of his Constituents who addressed him against the Union, in January 1799; in compliance with which address he then voted against it.**

“ I love both kingdoms, (Ireland and England) and have even frequently found in my acquaintance with the latter, a liberality, justice and affection towards this country which it sometimes doth not experience at home.”

“ Almost any situation would appear to me preferable to a renewal of the horrors and atrocities, and the almost general oblivion of the constitution experienced in the last year.”

* These extracts are inserted to shew the tendency of his mind at the time, though he voted against the Union.

"I cannot, at the same time that I vote against the Union, forbear to express my apprehensions, that if some improvement does not take place in the state or conduct of the parliament of Ireland such a fatal apathy to its existence will take place, as will at length occasion the evil you dread.†"

† It was the case.

‡ He never denied the *necessity* of an Union to be an ~~evil~~.

*The following is the Substance of Doctor Browne's
Speech in the House of Commons on Wednesday the
15th of January 1800.*

Doctor Browne, (College.) Real change of opinion after twelve months reflexion, respect for the sentiments of no inconsiderable part of the nation, attention to his Majesty's repeated declarations that he thought an Union essential to the interests of the empire, might be adequate causes of men's *now* voting, at least to *hear* the propositions; indignation at the measures which were pursued after the rejection of the Union last year, not by the Chief Governor, (whose conduct and character I have always admired and revered, and whose coming into this country I consider a blessing to it) but by parliament. was the *especial* cause which made me declare both in and out of the house, and write to several of my political friends last summer, that if ever propositions of Union were brought on again, I would vote to hear what they were, as I thought our situation could scarcely be worse, and any report that hope,

promise or inducement of any kind was held out to me to influence my vote, is inconsistent with my parliamentary conduct for seventeen years, and absolutely false and groundless. My vote this night leaves me as much at liberty to reject the propositions in toto, *i. e.* to vote against an Union, as ever I was in my life.

I always as I conceive have left myself unconfined as to considering this important subject, as I think every rational man should do: I am sure I have always intended to do so, and accordingly at the last general election*, being the first interrogated upon the subject, I refused to bind myself, saying that I could not foresee all possible cases, but I did not conceive any probable, in which I could be brought to assent to such a measure. My present colleague, being next asked, put the case of preference to an Union with France. I am positive that he first mentioned this as one instance, but I do not recollect in the least, nor do I believe that he or any of the candidates confined himself to that single possible case, and I am sure it is not conformable to the constant modes of thinking and resolutions which I have had upon the subject, nor did I ever hear it asserted that I had limited myself in any such manner till about two hours before the House met, nor ever dream of any person asserting or thinking so; if any words were written down, why were not the candidates furnished with a copy? and if it was so, how happened it, that no person ever reminded

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* See the Documents hereafter annexed.

me of it; and in pursuance of the same principle, I did positively in parliament, on the third day of the last session, when an attempt was made to exclude the question for ever, refuse to assent; and if my constituents thought I had bound myself, what occasion to address me on the subject, or why not remind me of this in the address?

Inconsistency of conduct is objected to me on three grounds: 1st, as to what passed at the election, to which I have answered: 2d, as to my vote last year, to which I answer, that my speech at the time shews it was founded upon reasons and arguments adapted only to that time and occasion, except as to the competency of parliament, on which I had serious doubts, which however I conceive must have been unfounded, as not a single man supported me in them: 3d, as to the amendment last year proposed by the opponents of the Union, going to bar it *in perpetuum* as much as that of this year, I do not conceive that it did. It is avowed to have that meaning at present. It was not so understood last year by me or by the parliament, for they distinguished it from the resolution proposed on the third night of the Session, to which, as being final, they refused to assent, and so did I in express words.

To an Union in the abstract I am no friend; if I ever agreed to it, it would only be as to a lesser evil. I have ever wished to preserve the constitution of 1782, but I have ever thought that an Union

with England was preferable to some situations in which we have been. Not any Union, but Union upon great and comprehensive terms, made acceptable to all and every part of the nation. After the scenes which I beheld in this country during the rebellion and for some time after, I expressly declared to some very respectable and dignified friends who well remember it, that I thought such an Union, under the then existing circumstances, desirable, and I never did at any time shew that heat and fury upon the subject which other men have done. The disposition of the college in general is against it, but so far from being universal, that nearly half of the governing part of the society favour it; and some leading members of it have said they would never vote for the man who opposed the Union.

It doth not seem to me a good method of promoting the Union, to persecute every man with calumny and abuse, who says that he thinks we ought to hear what England proposes, even though he rests that opinion merely on his notion of its propriety; if opposition to the Union proceeds from love of the nation I respect it; if from regard to individual power or personal aggrandizement, I concern not myself about it.

One word to an insinuation, not very liberal, that I have lived on the bounty of a country to which I am ungrateful. Both parts of the assertion I deny. The fellow of a college who obtains his situation by hard

hard labour and industry, purchases it, and no more lives on bounty than the lawyer or the rector. I am not so humble as to think that I could not obtain a competency in any country, nor did I come into this without one. Seventeen years disinterested service have not been ingratitude, though in some quarters they have met with it.

I should be more affected by this kind of attack, if it did not proceed from a gentleman notoriously a candidate for the College, who communicates with those of my constituents whose great industry is to supplant me.

Had I seen, after the rejection of the Union last year, any measures brought forward to conciliate the people, or to heal the distractions of the country; had I seen any reviviscence of that spirit which produced the constitution of 1782, coming forward to preserve it; I should not have listened to proposals of Union, nor would you have again heard its name. But for gentlemen to suppose that if parliament doth not support itself, that it can be supported; to suppose that without domestic virtue, the nation will trouble itself about its existence, is absurd; the truth is, apathy is gone through the nation upon the subject; the thing is evident; in 1782, the idea of Union could not have been brought forward; in 1785, it could not have been brought forward; why can it now? because then the parliament had the warm affections of the nation, and now it has not.

This language from me at least is not inconsistent; I have never said with one side of the house, at one time that the parliament was the most virtuous, at another time the most vicious assembly upon earth; nor with the other, after abusing it during my parliamentary life, hold it up as a paragon of virtue; I have never been ready at one time to hang my friend, or pull down his picture, at another to hold him up as a being from heaven; my mind is more equable, and I have ever said, that if there was not renovation in the parliament, it must perish.

The method of preventing Union was not by rebellion, nor by Orange systems; not by looking for republics, nor by holding up every man as a rebel, who disapproved of particular measures; it would have been by regular obedience to the laws, and constitutional parliamentary opposition to any improper measures.

The measures of last session, to which I have alluded particularly, are the Rebellion bill and the Fitzgerald bill; the first, which I know was rather forced upon the government than sought for by it, and which therefore is not imputable to the executive power, enables any petty officer to take up any person on the vague charge of assisting the rebellion on his mere suspicion, founded on any foolish word or indiscreet trifling action, try him and execute him, without the possibility of appeal to any other tribunal. This law still exists—why do we not feel it?

why

why do we not know it? why are we ignorant that we live under such power? because the wisdom, the prudence, the temper, the humanity, the goodness of the Chief Governor prevent it; but can I forget that we live under such law; can I forget that the parliament, while it contended against the ademption of its rights, voluntarily relinquished them all, or that to-morrow a hot or imprudent or weak successor might make us feel this unbounded power in its excess?

The other, which I call the Fitzgerald bill, made for a particular instance, has, as it was thought it would, screened the greatest outrage upon private innocence that ever was known: give me leave to say to my certain knowledge no measure ever so much promoted the Union, nor made so many converts among the dispassionate viewers of our conduct in England; and of that country permit me to say, the abuse upon this occasion neither tends to peace, nor is true—for I have found in it, and so I said a year ago to my constituents, more coolness, more kind disposition to Ireland, than among the sons of Ireland; and to represent it as always hostile to us evidently tends to separation.

Let me know before I reject Union what is to follow: is it the old system? is it the colonial system? are we to see the Chief Governor with all his might holding in the reins of government to prevent absurd fury from plunging it again in scenes of blood and horror,

horror, which I do verily and in my conscience believe it would be at this moment, were it not for his prudence, wisdom and temper? On the other hand, let me wait to hear what are the terms of the Union; is the church of Ireland sufficiently protected? that being done, are all safe privileges given to all other his Majesty's subjects? if the city of Dublin is injured, are any measures taken to make it compensation? if the poor and peasantry of Ireland are to be injured by increase of absentees, is any additional provision made for them? let me hear all this, and then determine, but not determine madly and unhearing: doth the contrary conduct favour of private views or public affections? for my part, I will use my judgment coolly, regardless of abuse, if I justify myself to rational and dispassionate men.

If I have been guilty of any crime or any folly, it has been that of not following throughout my original sentiments, (which were in favour of an Union, as I could shew by appeal to the first and purest men in the nation, ever since the rebellion broke out) and in suffering false complaisance to an ungrateful portion of my constituents, and foolish hopes of a renovation in the parliament, to give me in the last session an appearance and in some measure the reality of holding for the time a different sentiment.

*The following is the Substance of Doctor Browne's
Speech in the House of Commons on Tuesday the 18th
of February 1800.*

Doctor Browne, (College.) Said that he persisted in opinion that Parliament should go through the consideration of all the propositions, though, until they came out of the mint and it was seen how they might be modified by parliament, it was impossible for any man to say whether he would ultimately approve the mass; but in this his mind was now settled, that under the existing circumstances, Union, if upon good terms, was desirable as a refuge from ruin, and therefore he must wish and hope that the terms should come out such as might be advantageous and acceptable to the nation. He never had disguised the great foundation of his opinion, however unpolite or unpalatable it might be; it rested on long observation of the state of the country and of the state of parliament, and particularly of what happened in the last session.

I have, continued he, ever since I sat in this house condemned the system of parliament; I said

it must end in its extinction. I did, when the rebellion broke out, though I abhorred and shuddered at the atrocities of the rebels, think that many things were done in and after its suppression more founded in resentment and rage than in cool and sound policy ; but even supposing those severities necessary, I do not wish to see them repeated: it may be necessary to cut off an arm or a leg, but I do not wish to see the operation; and these two causes, the corruptions of parliament and the scenes of the rebellion, have given to my mind this bias to an Union.

When the present Chief Governor came over, and wished to appease those evils, I naturally approved his measures, and I became warmly attached to his person; his candour, his goodness and his wisdom attached me, and no other motive. I did then think that union was necessary, and I said so to many respectable persons who well remember it: when the measure actually came on, I thought the nation was taken unawares and had not proper time; I had doubts of the competency of parliament; I felt a temporary hope that experience would teach us the absolute necessity of altering the system of parliament, and departing from the system of violence if we wished to preserve the parliament; and perhaps false complaisance to a portion of my constituents had some effect in counteracting my real opinion; the parliament instantly afterwards returned to its old systems; violence and bills of violence were

were redoubled with multiplying force; most of the opponents of union were as ready to agree in them as any other men; an absolute military government was established, under which we still live, though happily so administered that we do not feel it; every thing returned to its former state, and I returned to my former opinion; in so doing I do not think I have been inconsistent; I do not differ in opinion from other gentlemen who have condemned the systems of parliament; we differ only in inference; they think it will be better, I am convinced it never will, and therefore act accordingly.

But as to the greater part of the gentlemen who oppose the Union, hear what their language is; we are in opposition only on this one measure; we do not oppose it to save the people from taxation: no, there is no quantity of taxation and contribution which they are not willing to give; is it to save the people from power? no, there is no power which they are not willing to part with, even the very whole power of the parliament and all its control to the executive; is it to save the people from the scourge? no, they are ready and will re-enact all the laws of the last session in the present: ask for a window tax, calculate it at what you please, let it produce five times as much, we have no objection; ask for unlimited powers, you need not ask for them, we would force them on you; do you complain of the parliament having the power of war and peace? we engage never to exert it; do you complain of its

having power to appoint a regent ? we will disclaim it ; all the properties of a free and independent parliament we will give up, but leave us the name : are these arguments to be addressed to the people of Ireland ? what doth it all come to ? leave to us our power and individual importance, let us recur to the old colonial method of governing or rather grinding the country, and we do not care what you do ; when I saw and when I heard these things, is it wonderful that I did not find myself much attached to an opposition to Union upon such principles ; no men have been more effective in bringing us to the necessity of union by mistaken and severe modes of government than these very gentlemen.

It has been said that I pass a libel on the parliament ; I do not mean to do so ; if I did, this should not be the place ; I am not ambitious of being sent to prison, or of kneeling at your bar ; but every one must laugh at the encomiums passed on the parliament out of doors, by those who for twenty years have been representing it as the great nuisance and grievance of the nation, and who now speak of it as the paragon of virtue, as the quintessence of excellence, as the paradise of disinterestedness ; I know not what epithet of oriental hyperbole they would not bestow upon it ; *timeo Danaos* ; give me leave to suspect these praises ; they want the parliament, not because they love it, but as a theatre for future machinations and dangerous designs.

But it is said is the English Parliament better? I believe it is infinitely; but if it were not, what would that argument go to; it might go to the extinction of parliaments altogether. I cannot help it, said the good Bishop *Butler*, when arguing for the immortality of the soul he was told, why this will prove dogs and horses to be immortal; I cannot help it, if the argument be a good one, it must stand: so I say if I were writing an Utopia, I would say if ever the time came that parliament served as a stalking horse under which to shoot the arrows of the executive, as a name under which the executive might do, what it would not dare to without its influenced sanction, or as a circus in which to combat for the destruction of the constitution, I should think the existence of that parliament of little consequence; this is not the case of the English Parliament; I do not presume to say that it is of any other.

But would the English United Parliament be kinder to this country? no man seems to dare to answer the question; I will answer it—I believe in my heart and soul it would—the reason is plain, because it would not be actuated by those passions, those resentments, that thirst for revenge, that rooted memory of injuries which exists here. We have heard it this night lamented, that persons who are said to have been in rebellion were suffered to open their mouths; we hear it every day in conversation lamented that they are suffered to exist; what! was there

there to be no amnesty, no pardon, no oblivion, no termination to these distractions ? yet this is natural, it is incident to human nature ; and therefore I say, men at a distance, more cool, less impassioned, will think more kindly of the gross of the inhabitants of this country, and I do assert that in all my intercourse with the English I have found them more reasonable, more compassionate, more kindly disposed to the people and the peasantry of this country than are its own gentry.

England is perpetually spoken of as a foreign, nay as an hostile country ; does this lead to peace ? is it wise ? is it true ? the policy of England to us was false for 600 Years ! it was ; but has she not for a long time past acknowledged her error, retracted her claims and altered her system ; and what is the wisdom of perpetually reminding a sincere friend of old bickerings and ancient errors ; in commercial concerns there may be some jealousy of England, let this be well watched in the articles of Union ; but in all other respects I cannot conceive why England should possibly entertain any sentiment hostile to us, and every man conversant in England knows the contrary to be the fact.

But of all the charges against England, the most audacious as most false is in my opinion that of her causing or fomenting the disturbances and distractions of this country ; let any man lay his hand upon his heart and say that he really believes this :

Good

Good heaven, Sir, have we occasion to look abroad for the causes of our dissentions?—do we not know and see every moment the bitter animosities of catholic to protestant and protestant to catholic, of ancient inhabitants to modern settlers, of old claimants to new possessors, of tenants who think themselves oppressed and landlords who complain of murder and massacre, of rebels to loyalists, and loyalists to rebels? what has England to say to all this? did England create catholics? did England create Orange men? did England create men's hearts or their passions? no, England is endeavouring to do all she can to allay and prevent these distractions; and the passions, the prejudices and the fury of the parliament, the gentry and the people of Ireland, stand in her way.

See how just is this accusation; she sends over a Chief Governor here on purpose to cool and moderate and quiet and allay those furious animosities, and for that very reason a party is made against him by the very men who complain of England's fomenting our disorders; had that great man yielded to the violence of such advisers, perhaps he would not have found so many opponents to an Union.

Foolish and deluded people of Ireland, I cannot help exclaiming! I know your virtues, I know your spirit, but surely a more versatile people never was seen upon the face of the earth! you seem in love with oppression, and when a power comes here which

which endeavours to extricate you from it, you long to return to those scourgings and whippings and burnings which first disgusted me into the support of Union, and like a Russian wife seem to like those best who beat you most, and surely you will find them among its opponents.

I think therefore in favouring an Union I am a friend to the people ; but if they are of a contrary opinion, if they wish, as the King of Prussia said of the people of Neufchatel, to be damned to all eternity, I cannot help it, and I should be sorry that they were forced or made by violence even to be happy ; but let me first hear the voice of the nation : I hear the voice of violence, I hear the voice of party, I hear the voice of lawyers bawling because their mart will be gone, and of politicians because their personal importance will be lessened, but I cannot hear the cool, sober voice of the nation at large.

I must next advert to the inflammatory language heard in this place ; men admit the competency of parliament, and yet say they will not obey it ; they say parliament is wise and good, and yet the next moment they will not submit to it ! but, say they, it is influenced and packed ; this is not very consistent, but if this be so it ought to be reformed or to be extinguished ; say they, it is not free : there are different modes of affecting its freedom, it may be influenced by government or intimidated by mobs, seats may be filled

filled by administration or bought up by the purse of a party ; a man's freedom is not a little affected, if following his own sentiments is to be followed by calumniating his character or knocking him on the head. And here give me leave to say, that the vile calumny, the monstrous abuse, the lying slander cast upon every man who is friendly to an Union, is one reason which gives me a strong bias to it ; that cause is not good which requires such supports.

Another thing which has been truly observed gives me a strong bias to an union ; it is that, however loyal men disagree upon the subject, the disaffected have no difference ; it was said they would be delighted with the measure as leading to separation ; I have not found it—on the contrary they are outrageous against it : must not I think that measure a guard against separation which the friends of separation so vehemently detest.

As to the propositions of Union themselves in detail, there are some things which I dislike, and many which I would wish to see modified ; I wish the peers were not to be elected for life ; I wish the boroughs were not to be bought, or if it must be so, that it had been a private transaction, and I even think it would have been wise in England to have done it with her own money, not to give pretence for discontent at the burthen in this country ; I have some doubts whether our quota or proportion of taxation of two seventeenths

teenth may not be too much, and I am extremely anxious that something very considerable indeed should be done for the city of Dublin : I wish the city would point out itself what it thinks most for its advantage, and I think the parliament should be most liberal and go great lengths indeed in making compensation to it, if it is likely to suffer.

I have the honour of being descended from a long series of clergymen of the church of England and must naturally be attached to it, but I do not see what mischief could ensue, if after an Union the catholics were put on the same footing with any other dissenters from the established church ; at present, if admitted into parliament, they might acquire too much weight in this isolated kingdom, and danger might ensue, but then they would have exactly the proportionate weight in the whole empire which they ought to have, neither more nor less ; they would have no pretext for complaint, but be exactly on a footing with all other his majesty's subjects : why then is not this done ? I verily believe because an Irish parliament would not suffer it ; in the United one it is open to be done : no, says one honourable gentleman, this excludes the catholics for ever ; no, says another, my objection is that this doth not exclude them for ever. These are contrary objections, but I think the latter assertion is evidently true, and therefore I hope and think that the United parliament will do that with safety which the Irish parliament always has refused to do as dangerous.

And now, Sir, with all these objections, give me leave to ask, if Union be rejected what system is to be pursued? I may object to parts of the proposals, but I must wish on the whole that they should be acceptable, because otherwise what follows? says an honourable friend of mine, an Union must be followed by a completely military government, I hope not; but what will the rejection of Union be followed by? an infinitely more military government sought for and approved by most of those men who oppose the Union, by the re-enaction and continuation of all the severe laws of former years, by all the ancient severity, by the old colonial system, probably by a revival of all the horrors and distractions which we have not long since escaped.

As I fear this city may be injured, though not in the degree which wild imagination represents, I own the apprehension least I should by my vote injure one tradesman or his family in the city of Dublin affects my mind more than all the declamations which could be made for years about the free and independent parliament which I never saw and never shall see, and about the pride of the nation opposed to its felicity: but are not the poor of Dublin as wretched now as they can be; I know much about them, I have felt much for them, and according to my ability have endeavoured to shew it; can an Union make them worse? I hope not, I hope it may bring in that capital and those manufactures which are wanted to make their condition better; at all events, how can they be worse off than now without an Union; we

may talk of Union, but the ladies of Dublin might, by adopting a single fashion, by not flying to foreign manufactures, by wearing the really beautiful dresses of their own country, do more for the poor of Dublin in a year than an Union could effect against them in ten; there is one of our misfortunes, it is absolutely wicked, and I never see the present dresses of the female sex without melancholy and sorrow.

One word more as to the catholics; I am a sincere protestant, not like many, a merely political but a religious protestant, with opinions founded on reason, study and reflection; but I wish that every privilege should be granted to the catholics consistent with the safety of the establishment, for to the establishment also on much reflexion I am a steady friend.

Every body says we cannot go on as we have done, yet no new plan is proposed by the opposers of Union; in fact they never could agree upon one: the major part are of opinion that Union is not necessary, that if they had been let alone they would have kept down the country with a strong hand as had been done for one hundred years past, and that nothing was wanting but not to have stopt them in the career of whipping, scourging, shooting and burning, and refusal of all amnesty, to bring matters to their old footing, they, therefore, will wish to return to their old measures; the rest will be for redress of grievances, and the old question of catholic emancipation will instantly be revived; in truth

I think it follows inevitably that we must incorporate with the catholics : to give them a liberty of getting into parliament while the boroughs continue as they are would be trifling and mockery ; they therefore must wish for reform. Thus all the old questions will be revived, all the old distractions ; and after three, or four, or six years of misery, the whole property of the nation, or at least the protestant part of it, will recur back to Union as the only resource.

Such is the picture which I form to myself of future events in case this measure be rejected, and under these impressions, as I have said, though I may disapprove of parts of the detail, I must necessarily wish that the whole may be so modified as to meet the wishes of the nation and pass into stability.

The following is the Substance of Doctor Browne's Speech in the House of Commons on Wednesday the 21st of May 1800.

Dr. Browne said it was not his intention to have trespassed upon the attention of the House, but an honourable gentleman (Mr. Ball) had made some observations so personal to him that he could not avoid saying a few words. The honourable and learned gentleman had stated that he (Dr. Browne) before he supported the measure of Union had made a bargain with government; he begged leave flatly to deny the assertion; he sincerely wished that every thing that had passed between government and him was known to all the world, and he was sure his character would not suffer, nor the motives which led him to support this measure be questioned after such a disclosure, which would do honour to both parties. The attack which the honourable gentleman had made upon him was of a nature more calculated to excite his laughter than any other sensation; sometimes he was represented as being desirous of being a bishop, sometimes a judge, and

sometimes a provost ; he confessed he never had any objection to the dignities which the gentleman so liberally conferred, if they were attainable with honour,† but he solemnly denied that he had made any thing like terms with government, or was actuated by any such unworthy motive in the support he gave to this measure. He believed he might without impropriety state the only conversation he had with the noble lord previous to the introduction of this subject ; the noble lord, with a proper respect to the members of that House, enquired the sentiments of every gentleman upon the important question of the Union with England ; upon that occasion he did declare his sentiments to the noble lord to be decidedly in favour of the measure ; he confessed that afterwards, in compliance with the wishes of his constituents, he had foolishly opposed his own opinion by voting against the discussion of Union ; he was not afraid to state the whole of his conduct upon this subject to the House and the world. The honourable and learned gentleman had alluded to the language which he held upon the propositions in the year

1785

† Doctor Browne never was the hypocrite to say that he rejected advancement if attainable with honour, nor the fool to think, that a country gains by virtue always rejecting station, to let vice take it ; but he was always ready to forfeit any prospects rather than do what he thought not right, and every one knows how much he has forfeited by that mode of thinking, and in what situation he might have been now, had he acted otherwise.

1785; he was ready to avow every word he had said upon that occasion; he did oppose them, because he considered them as an attack upon the freedom of the Irish Legislature; but what similarity was there between that measure and the present; nothing but a complete confusion of ideas could lead any man to confound them together. He was willing to confess that he was no friend to Union in the abstract, and that he was convinced if good councils had been adopted the measure would not have been necessary; but on the termination of the late rebellion he was convinced of the necessity of an Union. He knew the sentiments he was delivering would not be pleasing to either side of the House, but he was at that time convinced that the extremities and violence to which some of the Orangemen went, together with the excesses of the rebels, endangered the existence of the country; the name of Orangeman had been abused; in the true original sense of the word he was proud to state himself an Orangeman. When the question was brought forward, he had, as he before stated, voted in compliance with the sentiments of his constituents against the measure; but when he saw of what discordant materials the opposition was formed, when he saw that all its *new* assistants only opposed the Union because they thought it would diminish their own power, he determined never to act with them again. Though he differed from many gentlemen

men in this country in his opinion upon this subject, he was happy to find that he agreed with persons of the greatest eminence in England, with whom he was always proud to concur in sentiment—he alluded particularly to Earl Moira and Earl Fitz-william, who appeared to him to object not to the principle but to the time.

He begged now to take notice of an assertion made by the gentlemen on the other side of the House, and which they had repeated so often that they really seemed to believe it themselves, viz. that the people of this country were decidedly against the measure; he had never heard any other proof of this circumstance than the assertion of the gentlemen themselves; indeed, there was every reason to believe that the very reverse was the fact, for if the country had been as decidedly hostile to the measure as it had been represented, it would not be so tranquil as it now is; was it not supposed that on the last circuit the country would have been worked up into a state of agitation against the Union? and yet the most perfect tranquillity had prevailed. In the year 1780, when Ireland demanded a free trade, it was the voice of the whole people, and it was irresistible;† in 1782, when she

demanded

† The papist then joined with the protestant. In 1798 the protestant in his fury against the papist forgot that no great good effect had ever been produced but by their joint exertions, and was blind enough not to see that he was carrying the Union.

demanded the repeal of the 6th Geo. 1st. it was also the voice of the whole people, and was consequently irresistible; and if the Union with England was as contrary to the sentiments of the people as had been represented, no minister, whatever his power in parliament might be, could possibly carry it; if the people were not in favour of the Union, at least they were indifferent to it.

The gentlemen on the other side were very fond of appealing to the people, and language was frequently used of the most inflammatory tendency. He remembered, when some time ago he opposed the measures of Lord Westmorland and Lord Camden,* some of the gentlemen now in opposition applied very strong epithets to him, but by their conduct upon this occasion they had shewn that it was only some kind of rebellions to which they were averse.

Gentlemen professed to appeal to the people; he would willingly appeal to any peasant of common understanding upon this question, and would ask him what he most feared as the consequence of an Union—an increase of his tythes, his rent, or his taxes?

* It is notorious that Mr. Browne always shewed in the strongest manner the most active attachment to the king, the church and the constitution, though he blamed certain ministerial measures. Of this he received the strongest acknowledgment from Lord Camden, though in opposition.

taxes? with respect to his tythes he would not be put in a worse state by a Union, and the late bill would place him even in a better situation. As to rent, perhaps he differed from many gentlemen upon this subject, but one of his strongest reasons for supporting this measure was that he thought it would have the effect of reducing the rents in Ireland, and this he thought would be of advantage to the country, because at present the rents bore no proportion to the profits of the land; he was persuaded that after an Union rent would decrease, because hitherto land was the only commodity at market; but the encrease of manufactures and of capital would lower the revenue and encrease the value of the land. With regard to taxes, he should be glad to know what tax the people of this country were ever saved from by the parliament except only the absentee tax. He had but one observation more to make; gentlemen were much in the habit of wishing to make personal attacks upon him; he was not ashamed to say that he feared God; if not the scriptures had told him that at the last day heaven would be ashamed of him; he was not afraid to observe that from his peculiar situation, as senior fellow of a college, decorum made it particularly incumbent upon him not to seek for quarrels; nor was he forgetful that the knowledge that a duel might deprive him of 700l. a year made adventuring adversaries particularly courageous in seeking

seeking for so unequal a combat ; he spoke boldly because he felt he was no coward, and he believed every man felt it; but while at the same time he was conscious that there were situations arising accidentally and involuntarily between gentlemen which are much to be lamented, and to real spirit difficult to be resisted ; he was free to own, that if any man vented his cool blooded, interested, and premeditated malice upon him, and much more if he was the poor instrument of the malice of others, he would treat his impotent assault with silent contempt.



A P P E N D I X.

To ARTHUR BROWNE, Esq; one of the Representatives, &c. &c. &c.

SIR,

We, the undersigned Electors of Trinity College, Dublin, deeply regret that we are under the necessity of addressing you again on a subject on which we had hoped that you and we were sufficiently explicit. With equal astonishment and grief we hear the strongest reports that your parliamentary conduct this session is likely to disappoint all that expectation which we conceived ourselves fully warranted to cherish, as well by your answer to our former address's, as by your public engagements at the general election, and your vote and declarations in the last session of parliament. Determined as we are to reject as long as possible the suspicion that you are capable of acting in a manner so disgraceful to your character, we yet are compelled by the prevalence

prevalence of those rumours, thus to call on you to contradict them, and to evince by a decided and manly opposition to the measure of a Legislative Union with Great Britain, that you disdain to take advantage of any verbal ambiguity, if any such exists, in order to evade the performance of a plain and solemn promise.

[Signed by nine Fellows and thirty-six Scholars.]

Jan. 21st 1800.

The indecorum of this address to a Senior Fellow speaks for itself ; its veracity may be judged of by the following documents.

Dr. Browne's Answer to the foregoing Address.

GENTLEMEN,

Your address depends entirely on assumptions in which I cannot acquiesce.—The first is of a plain and solemn promise and engagement at the last general election, *always* to oppose the measure of a Legislative Union with Great Britain: *This I must utterly deny*; I never heard it asserted till last Wednesday, and then with the exception, *unless it were necessary to prevent an Union with France*, which many rational men now think it is. You put it without allowing that I made any exception at all. However, with or without the exception, I do deny the charge; at the time scarce any man even dreamt of the probability of such an event; I am sure I did not: but even so, my recollection and conviction is, that though *repeatedly applied to*, I refused absolutely to bind myself on the subject, saying, that I could not foresee all possible cases, though I did not see the probable one in which I could approve of such a measure; and in this recollection and conviction I have the satisfaction of being confirmed, not only by what I know of the constant habit and determination of my mind not to bind myself, but by the concurrent recollection and conviction of some of the principal persons in the College, and also of two Barristers of the highest eminence, of the most unimpeachable credit, and who of all men are the most perfectly unconnected with parties or politics*;

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* Mr. French and Mr. Mayne.

the names of these gentlemen I have privately communicated to you in the envelope of this answer, and am ready to communicate to any man. The same is confirmed by many other persons.

The second assumption is of declarations in parliament binding me in the same manner: they should have been stated, for I am ignorant of them; but of this I am positive, that so different was the impression on my mind, that on the third night of the session, when an attempt was made to stifle the question for ever, I started up, called out to the chair, though not heard in the confusion, and said that I never would vote for such a resolution; and as I had refused to bind myself in perpetuum out of parliament, so I would in it. This I am sure must be recollect^ded by two gentlemen of high character, who endeavoured to dissuade me from doing so, and whose names I have also communicated to you, and am ready to mention to any man.*

Another implied assumption seems to be that you speak the universal sense of the College; yet you know as well as I do that there is a number of Fellows, nearly, if not entirely, equal to that which has signed the address, and among those almost all the Senior Fellows, whose sentiments are favourable to an Union—and who so express themselves in private!

The only possible ground upon which I can admit that there is any pretence even for supporting the opinion

* Sir Laurence Parsons and Mr. Hardy.

opinion you maintain is, my answer of the last year, and that you do not appear to have much rested upon ; that answer must speak for itself.—During the rebellion my mind had been strongly inclined to an Union, and so I said to many persons, not as a desirable thing in itself, but as a release from misery.—At the time of giving that answer I spoke what my sentiments then were, or perhaps went a little further in consequence of your address ; that answer I always conceived as relating to the then present time, and long hesitated whether I should not more particularly express this, which I think is evident from its whole tenor.—I even foretold what would be the case if the measures of parliament were not altered.—To suppose that my then opinion was not to be affected by any future measures or changes in the state of the country, is supposing impossibility ; in fact subsequent measures have had a violent effect upon my mind : and give me leave to say, as to the first part of that answer, that I then thought my constituents much more unanimous in your sentiments than I have since found them to be.

To attend to the wishes of all my constituents must be desirable ; to do this, where there is a diversity of sentiment, and the majority of Senior Fellows differ in opinion from the majority of Junior, which I positively assert, from their own declarations, they now do, is impracticable ; but least of all am I concerned about the wishes of those of the

Fellows, who, for what reason I know not, have, in my opinion, for no inconsiderable time past been hostile to me, and taken every step to remove me from my seat in parliament, before they alleged even any pretext for doing so: and in this number I am forced to say, I believe, are included not less than seven of those who have addressed me, at the head of which addressers I see the name of my principal opponent at the last election.

I highly respect the generous and warm feelings of the young men who are my constituents in College; I have had my experience of them: but it is remarkable that I see in the number of signatures, I think, but seven of those who were my constituents at the general election, and very few indeed of my old friends in the number, which is no small satisfaction to me: and it is odd, that the others, some of whom must just then have entered the College, and most of whom I do not know, should be so accurate in their recollection. Allowing for any possible bias to their Tutors, I am sure their feelings are sincere, and they think they are right, whether they are so or not: but the assertion in a great measure comes either from my foes or from those who can probably know nothing about it.

I do not mean in the smallest degree to judge of the conduct of my colleague: I consider him as much at liberty as myself, and am sure he has and will

will do whatever he thinks right ; but if my recollection doth not fail me, on the third day of last session,* when the motion was for leaving out of the address the clause which promised to take into consideration his Majesty's Message as to the Union, he voted for retaining it, that is, for considering the message, and on the first day of this session was absent from the House ; yet neither of these circumstances seem to have awoke that attention which has been so sharply alive to my conduct.

I have only voted for considering his Majesty's Message ; I have not declared for a Legislative Union. I will use my free judgment on the subject ; to say any thing further would be admitting your positions—giving room for further altercation, or doing that which, in my opinion, I have always refused to do.

I beg pardon for the length of this answer, which was unavoidable : it was impossible to submit to such charges, and I am obliged strenuously to contradict them. I shall not follow you in asperity of language.

Your humble Servant,
A. BROWNE.

Jan. 22d 1800.

Copy

* The writer here was in substance right, though in error as to his recollection of the particular night and question ; he was sorry however that he introduced his colleague's name, which was not necessary, and must be imputed to his acting on the spur of the moment.

Copy of a Paper handed to Doctor Browne by Counsellor French of Kildare-street.

HAVING had the honour and happiness of being acquainted with the late most respectable Provost, Doctor Murray, he applied to me to be his assistant counsel at the late election for members for the University, which I declined, as I thought it would be inconsistent with the line in my profession which I had adopted of doing business only in my chambers: however my esteem for Doctor Murray was such, that I thought it my duty to meet and consult with the gentleman appointed by him as assistant counsel. These motives excited in me a curiosity to attend the general election in the College, and on that occasion I observed that the candidates were repeatedly and warmly pressed by some of the electors to give an explicit declaration against an Union of this country with Great Britain. Though I cannot recollect the particular expressions of the gentlemen making such requisition, or of the answers of Doctor Browne on that occasion, yet I am clear in opinion that he did not bind himself by any engagement either for or against such a measure, and that he declared himself clearly that he would not engage himself, *as possibly circumstances would oblige him, consistent with his duty, to support the measure,* though at that time he did not see the probability of such circumstances occurring: this is the conclusion I have drawn from what occurred in my hearing

hearing at the election, and I believe I am not mistaken in this conclusion, for the sentiments expressed on that occasion by Doctor Browne made an impression on me, and appeared to me then, as they do now, to be such as a *wise, conscientious and honest representative should adopt.*

ROBERT FRENCH.*

* To gentlemen in Ireland there is no occasion to state who Mr. French is ; to those of another kingdom it may be necessary to mention that his testimony is particularly brought forward, because it weighs in this country, as much as that of any individual whatever ; of long and great reputation at the bar, of fair and unfulfilled fame, of the purest moral character, remarkably unconnected through his life with politicks and party, he perhaps is the most unexceptionable witness that could possibly be adduced ; his leave to give this letter to the world, was conveyed in a note in which he gave his free permission to make any use of the letter, as he considered it but as that justice which he would do to the most perfect stranger ; his testimony was confirmed by Mr. Mayne, by the Bishop of Clonfert, by the Vice Provost of the College, by Mr. Barker, Curate of St. George's, and many other most respectable bystanders : hence may be estimated the veracity of the other charges.

SIR,

Understanding that you have received a letter from a gentleman who was present at your Election as a representative of this University, stating the impression on his mind concerning the engagements you entered into to oppose a Legislative Union with Great Britain, I beg leave in this way to inform you of some facts, which I am ready to verify by affidavit, and of which certainly I am the most competent witness, as being immediately concerned in them.

When *Doctor Stokes and I*** first called on the candidates to pledge themselves against the measure of an Union, there was much talk on their part, by which they appeared to aim at avoiding any specific engagement, putting (hypothetically) cases which they conceived might occur and render the measure eligible as a smaller evil; with all this *Dr. Stokes and I* avowed ourselves not satisfied, and declared our determination to leave the hall without voting, unless some of the candidates took a more explicit test; but our late respected Provost appearing much chagrined by the discussion of the question, we agreed to wave the subject 'till Dr. Stokes should

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* It appears then throughout, that Dr. Stokes and he were the only persons who troubled themselves about the matter; but what is implied in the address of the constituents? surely that the candidates were called on by the whole body of the electors. Is this fair, candid, or true! the truth is that at the time nobody else concerned themselves about the whims of Dr. Stokes and Mr. Walker.

be called on for his vote, and then bring the matter to a short issue by proposing to the candidates express terms, which if they declined to use we would not vote.

Accordingly, while the returning officer was taking the votes of others, I wrote down the following words :

“ I declare that there are no circumstances
 “ *which I can foresee** in which I will not to the
 “ utmost of my power oppose a Legislative Union
 “ with Great Britain.”

That this was the purport I am ready to swear, though I may not be accurate in each syllable, as you retained the paper.†

This written test I put into your hand about the time that Dr. Stokes was called on for his vote, expressing a hope that you would have no objection to use it; upon which (after looking at the paper) you stood up and repeated either the same words or words to the same effect, and each of the other candidates standing up said that he declared the same; then without farther talk upon the subject Dr. Stokes and I voted for you.

That the circumstance of a written test having been given, should be unknown to many who were present,

* Was the fury of the rebels, or the violence of the orangemen, or the late rebellion and distractions then foreseen?

† A singular test, retained by the supposed covenanter.

present, I do not wonder, on account of the manner in which I put it into your hands. Whether I succeeded in framing it with sufficient precision, it is not for me to say, I can only testify my design, and I am glad to find that the other candidates conceive themselves to have been decisively pledged.*

I have troubled you with this plain and brief statement of facts, as I find that you have received communications on the subject from others who certainly are not so well qualified to give information, and because I must consider you rather as desirous of receiving aid to your recollection than as seeking any corroboration of your assertions.

You are welcome, Sir, to make any use of this letter you please.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

J. WALKER,

* How does this appear?

S I R,

I received your letter, and though I have no recollection of the matters by you mentioned, and do not admit them, yet I think if admitted they confirm my statements. It appears by your own shewing that no persons interested themselves in the matter but you and Dr. Stokes, and that the writing by you alleged bears no manner of similitude to the engagement which I was charged as having entered into, and seems to me not essentially to differ from what in my answer to your late address I stated myself to have said at the election; how you conceived it is another matter, but I am sure I had no idea of conceiving it myself as you say you did, nor the least idea that you or any person would so conceive it, nor do I see any reason or ground for so doing.

Your humble Servant,

A. BROWNE.



